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DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/SE, EUR/PGI, INR/B, OES

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SUBJECT: CYPRUS GREENS REMAIN FAITHFUL PAPADOPOULOS ALLIES

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Classified By: Charge d'Affaires a.i. Jane B. Zimmerman, Reason 1.4 (b)

11. (C) SUMMARY: Cyprus's Greens should have little affection for a cantankerous chain-smoker who equates Birkenstocks with Wagnerian opera, not fuzzy footwear. Yet the island's pre-eminent environmental movement, represented in Parliament since 2001, steadfastly supports RoC President Tassos Papadopoulos and his campaign for re-election in February. Leader George Perdikis attributes the decision to back Papadopoulos to grudging admiration for the septuagenarian, whose smarts, adaptability, and political courage dwarf his competitors'. Greens priorities in coming years will require significant Presidential intervention, the payback Perdikis aims to secure (along with a Cabinet seat) for supporting Papadopoulos electorally. Prior party pronouncements and Embassy recollections reveal, however, that similar hard-line positions on the Cyprus Problem, not admiration for the incumbent's intellect and political savvy, underpin this "Green and Gray" arrangement. END SUMMARY.

Small, but Growing

12. (U) Cyprus's "Kinisy Ecologon" (Ecological Movement, or Greens) dates from February 1996. Its founders were environmentalists and members of pressure groups then-united in opposition to military exercises on and near Cyprus, cultivation and marketing of genetically-modified organisms (GMOs), continued utilization of high-frequency antennae at the British Sovereign Base Areas (SBAs), and other island cause celebres. Taking their first crack at politics in the May 1996 legislative elections, the Greens failed to obtain a seat. Five years later, they crossed the 1.7 percent threshold and sent Party Secretary General Perdikis to Parliament. The Greens enjoyed similar electoral success in the most recent (2006) race, returning Perdikis to the Environmental and Interior Committees. The party is the smallest of those currently supporting Papadopoulos's re-election (DIKO, EDEK, and EUROKO control 11, 5, and 4 MPs, respectively).

13. (C) Perdikis's wont for turning courtesies into media events -- last repeated at Greens HQ in October -- resulted in his removal from the Embassy's preferred contact list. Nonetheless, with elections just 40 days off and Cyprus's smaller parties playing oversized roles in a neck-and-neck race, we called on him January 10, armed with our talking points in case of ambush. Perdikis chose not to exploit the meeting, however, and proved thoughtful and expansive (if not entirely sincere, as we deduced later) throughout.

Party Agenda Necessitates Strange Bedfellows

¶4. (SBU) Cyprus's winter drought provided the perfect opening to solicit the Greens' priorities under a second Papadopoulos administration. Water issues indeed troubled Perdikis, Cyprus's inefficient farms foremost among them. Agriculture contributed perhaps five percent to the island's GDP, he observed, but consumed two-thirds of its H2O, preposterous in times of shortage. Crafting a sustainable water management policy represented Job One for his party, Perdikis explained. Numbers Two through Four required weaning Cyprus from dependence on fossil fuels, protecting the sensitive Akamas Peninsula from development, and ensuring the island remained free of genetically-modified organisms (GMOs).

¶5. (SBU) Gaining ground on the ambitious policy agenda meant taking on vested economic interests, Perdikis asserted; the Greens, while committed, were small, with just 3000 core supporters. The party needed strong allies and had found one in Tassos Papadopoulos. Despite his old-school credentials -- "Papadopoulos is a relic of the 60s," Perdikis observed -- the President possessed a fierce intellect, a willingness to consider alternate points of view, and the guts to take on the strongest opponents. Of Papadopoulos challengers Dimitris Christofias (AKEL) and Ioannis Kasoulides (DISY), he could not state the same. They lacked real understanding of environmental issues, and were either too weak or too inexperienced (or both) to do battle with Akamas developers, farmers' associations, or other special interest groups.

¶6. (SBU) The Greens had supported Papadopoulos during his first run and would continue to back the President, Perdikis assured; the 8000 votes it had won in the 2006

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Parliamentarian elections represented approximately two percent of the electorate, a not-insignificant total in this year's tight race. Internal polling showed party cohesion at 65 percent, Perdikis offered, equal to other parties not running their own candidates. Unlike in 2003 -- "when we were too small and new to make demands" -- the Greens sought a Cabinet slot as quid pro quo, namely the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources. No consensus candidate for the position had yet to emerge from party deliberations, he revealed. Perdikis himself had withdrawn his name from consideration, citing his preference for continued work in the legislature.

¶7. (SBU) The conversation turned to the Cyprus problem and to Marios Matsakis, the quirky European Parliamentarian who days earlier had announced his decision to stand in February's election. Matsakis's two-state solution (Reftel) appealed to those voters convinced that Cyprus's two communities were incapable of reconciling, we noted. Did the Greens leader fear that his candidacy threatened Papadopoulos's chances? Matsakis's extreme positions would find few takers, Perdikis argued. Rather than dividing the island into two sovereign entities, Turkish and Greek Cypriots needed to engage constructively to found a federal state, he concluded.

Sincerity? Not Here

¶8. (C) COMMENT: Our BS meter began flickering as Perdikis extolled the notoriously rigid Papadopoulos's flexibility; it positively pegged hours later upon cross-checking his statements and combing Post files. In one of our findings, the Greens leader in fact had lobbied the President for a Cabinet slot in 2003, but lost out to larger, better-organized coalition mates when dividing the ministerial spoils. And on the Cyprus Problem, few party bosses are less supportive of a federal solution -- a paper approved at the Greens' most-recent "Pancyprian Conference"

delineated clear opposition to "any division of the island and of the people of Cyprus based on ethnic origin or religion." We walked into this meeting suspecting that a shared desire for a unitary Cypriot state explained the unnatural alliance between Papadopoulos and Perdikis, and nothing that conspired therein changed our minds. But why the apparent attempt to mislead us, especially with CyProb statements that differed substantively from the party's previously stated positions? We seriously doubt the Greens have pulled a policy 180. Much more likely, Papadopoulos may have urged the party, as he earlier pressed right-wing EUROKO, to avoid mention of alternative (and to them, preferable) solution models in favor of the more palatable (to Turkish Cypriots and the international community) bi-zonal, bi-communal federation. END COMMENT.

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